

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

Please amend claim 4 and amend claim 11 as follows:

4. (amended) A method for forming an aperture through a dielectric layer comprising:
- providing a substrate;
 - forming upon the substrate a patterned first dielectric layer formed of a first dielectric material having a first dielectric constant of less than about 4.0, the patterned first dielectric layer defining a via;
 - forming upon the patterned first dielectric layer and filling the via a blanket second dielectric layer formed of a second dielectric material having a second dielectric constant of less than about 4.0, where an extrinsic hard mask layer is not formed interposed between the patterned first dielectric layer and the blanket second dielectric layer;
 - forming over the blanket second dielectric layer a patterned mask layer which defines the location of a trench to be formed through the blanket second dielectric layer, where an areal dimension of the trench is greater than and at least in part overlapping an areal dimension of the via; and
 - etching, while employing the patterned mask layer in conjunction with an anisotropic etch method, the blanket second dielectric layer to form an aperture comprising:
 - the trench; and
 - at least a portion of the via, where the patterned first dielectric layer provides an intrinsic etch stop within the anisotropic etch method.

11. (amended) A method for forming a patterned conductor layer within an aperture through a dielectric layer comprising:

providing a substrate;

forming upon the substrate a patterned first dielectric layer formed of a first dielectric material having a first dielectric constant of less than about 4.0, the patterned first dielectric layer defining a via;

forming upon the patterned first dielectric layer and filling the via a blanket second dielectric layer formed of a second dielectric material having a second dielectric constant of less than about 4.0, where an extrinsic hard mask layer is not formed interposed between the patterned first dielectric layer and the blanket second dielectric layer;

forming over the blanket second dielectric layer a patterned mask layer which defines the location of a trench to be formed through the blanket second dielectric layer, where an areal dimension of the trench is greater than and at least in part overlapping an areal dimension of the via;

etching, while employing the patterned mask layer in conjunction with an anisotropic etch method, the blanket second dielectric layer to form an aperture comprising:

the trench; and

at least a portion of the via, where the patterned first dielectric layer provides an intrinsic etch stop within the anisotropic etch method; and

forming within the aperture a contiguous patterned conductor interconnect and patterned conductor stud layer.